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Self-dedication

DISCOURSED

IN THE

Anniverſary

THANKSGIVING

OF A

Perſon of Honour

For a Great

DELIVERANCE.

By *JOHN HOWE*, M. A.

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MVSEVM
BRITAN
NICVM

TO THE

Right Honourable

JOHN,

Earl of *Kildare*, Baron of *Ophalia*, First of his Order in the Kingdom of *Ireland*.

My Lord,

I *Little thought, when, in ſo private a way, I lately offered much of the following Diſcourſe to* your Lordſhip's Ear; *I ſhould receive the command (which I am not now, ſo* far *as it proves to me* a poſſible one, *to* diſobey, *or* further *to* diſpute) *of expoſing it* thus *to the* view *of the World, or ſo much as to preſent it to your* Lordſhip's own Eye.

It was indeed, impoſſible *to me to give an* exact Account *of what was then Diſcourſed, from a* Memory *that was ſo treacherous, as to let ſlip many Things,* that *were* prepared, *and* intended *to* have been ſaid that Day; *and that could* much leſs (*being aſſiſted but by very imperfect Memorials*) *recollect* every Thing *that* was ſaid, *ſeveral Days after.*

Yet I Account, upon the whole it is much more varied by Enlargement, *than by* Diminution. *Whereby, I hope, it will be nothing leſs capable of ſerving the end of this* enjoyned *Publication of it.*

And I cannot doubt but the Injunction *proceeded from the* ſame pious Gratitude *to the* God of your Life, *which hath prompted, for ſeveral Years paſt, to the Obſervation of that Domeſtick Annual Solemnity,* in Memory *of your great Preſervation from ſo* near a Death. * *That the remembrance of* ſo great a Mercy, *might be the more* deeply impreſt *with* your ſelf, *and* improved alſo (ſo far as this means could ſignifie for that Purpoſe) *to the Inſtruction of* many others.

* By a fall from an Horſe. *Decemb.* 5. 1674.

Your Lordſhip *was pleaſed to allow* an Hour *to the hearing of that* Diſcourſe, *What was, propoſed to you* in it, *is to be the* Buſineſs of your Life.

And what is to be done continually *is* once *to be* throughly done. *The Impreſſion ought to be very* inward, *and* ſtrong, *which muſt be ſo* laſting *as to govern a Man's Life. And were it as fully done as* Mortality *can admit, it needs be more ſolemnly renewed at* ſet Times for that Purpoſe.

And indeed, that ſuch a Day *ſhould not paſs you* without a Fall, *nor* that Fall *be without an* Hurt, *and that* Hurt *proceed unto a* Wound,

and

and that Wound not to be Mortal, *but even* next to *it*, *looks like an* Artifice *and* Contrivance *of* Providence *to ſhew you how* near it could go *without cutting* thorough *that ſlender* Thred of Life, *that it might indear to you its* Accurate ſuperintendency *over your Life*, *that there might* here *be a* remarkable Juncture *in* that Thred, *and that whenſoever* ſuch a Day *ſhould revolve in the* Circle *of* your Year, *it might come again*, *and again*, with a Note upon it, *under your Eye*, *and appear ever to you as another* Birth-day; *or as an* earlier *Day of* Reſurrection.

Whereupon, my honoured Lord, *the* further Deſign *of that Providence is to be* thoroughly ſtudied, *and pondered deeply. For it ſhews it ſelf to be*, *at once*, *both* merciful *and* wiſe, *and as upon the* one Account *it belong'd to it to* deſign kindly *to you*, *ſo* upon the other, *to* form its deſign aptly, *and ſo as that its* means, *and* method *might fitly both* ſerve, *and* ſignifie *its* End.

If, *therefore*, *your* Lordſhip *ſhall be induc't to reckon the* Counſel acceptable, *which hath been given you*, upon this occaſion, *and to think the* Offering your ſelf to God, a living Sacrifice, *under the endearing Obligation of* ſo great a Mercy *is*, *indeed*, a reaſonable Service. *Your Life by that Dedication acquires a ſacredneſs*, *becomes an Holy*, *Divine Life. And ſo by one*, *and the ſame means*, *is not only renewed*, *and prolonged in*

the ſame kind *of* natural Life, *but is alſo* heightned *and* improved *to a* nobler, *and far* more excellent kind. *And thus, out of that* umbrage *only and ſhadow of Death, which ſat upon* one Day *of your Time, ſprings a* double Birth, *and* Reſurrection *to you. Whereby (as our Apoſtle ſpeaks in another Place of this Epiſtle) you come to* yield your ſelf to God as one alive from the Dead.

So your New Year (*which ſhortly after begins*) *will always be to you a* freſh ſetting forth *in that* new, *and* Holy Courſe of Life, *which ſhall at length (and God grant it to be, after the Revolution of* many fruitful Years, *wherein you may continue a* Publick Bleſſing *in this wretched World*) End, *and be perfected* in a State of Life not meaſured by Time, *wherein you are to be* ever with the Lord.

Which will Anſwer the Deſign *of* that merciful Providence *towards you*; *and of* this Performance (how mean ſoever) *of*

Your Honours

moſt obedient,

humble Servant

John Howe.

Self-Dedication.

ROM. XII. I.

I beſeech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that you preſent your bodies a living Sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reaſonable ſervice.

TWO things are more eſpecially conſiderable in theſe words: *The matter of the Exhortation*, that we would *preſent our bodies a living Sacrifice, holy, acceptable to God, our reaſonable ſervice.* And *the pathetick form of obteſtation* that is uſed to enforce it. *I beſeech you by the mercies of God.*

The former I intend for the *principal* Subject of the following Diſcourſe; and ſhall only make uſe of *the other*, for the purpoſe unto which the Holy Apoſtle doth here app'y it.

Our Buſineſs therefore muſt be, to ſhew the Import of this Exhortation. In the doing whereof, we ſhall,

1. Explain the *terms* wherein the *Text* delivers it.
2. Declare, more diſtinctly, the *nature of the thing* expreſſed by them.

1. For the Terms. [By *bodies*] we are to underſtand *our whole ſelves*, expreſt here (*Synecdochically*) by the Name of *bodies* for diſtinction ſake. It having been wonted, *heretofore*, to offer in Sacrifice the *bodies of beaſts*; The Apoſtle lets them know they are *now* to offer up *their own*. Meaning, yet, *their whole man*, as ſome of theſe following Words do intimate; and agreeably to the plain meaning of the Exhortation; 1 *Cor.* 6. 20. *Glorifie God in your bodies and ſpirits which are his.*

Sacrifice] is not to be underſtood in this place in a more reſtrained ſenſe, than as it may ſignifie whatſoever is, by God's own appointment, dedicated to himſelf.

According to the *ſtricter notion* of *a Sacrifice*, its *more noted general* diſtinction (tho' the *Jewiſh* be variouſly diſtributed *) is into *propitiatory*, and *gratulatory*, or *Euchariſtical*. *Chriſtianity* in that ſtrict ſenſe, admits but One, and that of the former ſort. *By which One* (*that of himſelf*) our Lord *hath perfected for ever them that are ſanctified.* We our ſelves, or any ſervice of ours, are only capable of being Sacrifices, *by way of analogy*, and that chiefly *to the other* ſort. And ſo all ſincere Chriſtians are, *as lively ſtones, built up a ſpiritual houſe, an holy prieſthood, to offer up ſpiritual ſacrifices, acceptable to God by Jeſus Chriſt.* 1 Pet. 2. 5. being both

* *See* Sigonius *de Repub. Hæb.* Dr. Outr. *de Sacr.*

both Temple, Prieſts, and Sacrifices all at once. As our Lord himſelf, *in his peculiar Sacrificing*, alſo was.

In the addition of [*living*] the deſign is carry'd on of ſpeaking both by way of *alluſion*, and *oppoſition* to the *Ritual ſacrificing*. By *way of alluſion*. For a *Morticinum*, any thing *dead of it ſelf*, the *Iſraelites* were not to eat *themſelves*, becauſe they were an Holy People (though they might give it to a Stranger) much more had it been deteſtable, as a Sacrifice *to God*. The Beaſt muſt be brought alive to the Altar. Whereas then *we are alſo* to offer *our bodies*, a *living ſacrifice*, ſo far there muſt be *an agreement*. Yet alſo, *a difference* ſeems not obſcurely ſuggeſted. The victim, *brought alive*, to *be ſacrificed*, was yet, to be *ſlain*, *in ſacrificing*: But here, *living* may alſo ſignifie *continuing to live*. You (*q. d.*) may be Sacrifices and yet *live on*. According to the ſtrict Notion we find given of a Sacrifice it is *ſomewhat to be*, in the preſcribed way, *deſtroy'd*, and *that muſt periſh*, in Token of their entire devotedneſs to God who offer it. When we *offer our ſelves*, Life will not be toucht by it, or at all impair'd, but improved and ennobled highly, by having *a ſacredneſs* added to it. Your Bodies are to be offered a Sacrifice, but an unbloody one. Such as you

Deut. 14. 21.

Cloppenburg. *Schol. Sacrific. and others.*

have

have no cauſe to be ſtartled at, it carries no dread with it, life will be ſtill whole in you. Which ſhews by the way, 'tis not *an inanimate body*, without the Soul. But the *bodily life* is but alluded to, and ſuppoſed, 'tis an *higher* and *more excellent one*, that is meant; *The ſpiritual, divine Life*, as Chap. 6. 13. *yield your ſelves to God, as thoſe that are alive from the dead.* And verſ. 11. ſhews what *that being alive* means, *Reckon your ſelves to be dead indeed unto ſin, but alive unto God through Jeſus Chriſt. Alive* by a Life which means *God*, which aims at him, terminates in him, and is deriv'd to you through *Chriſt*. As he alſo ſpeaks, *Gal.* 2. 19, 20. *I am dead to the Law, that I might live to God. I am crucifi'd with Chriſt. Nevertheleſs I live, yet not I, but Chriſt liveth in me, and the life which I now live in the fleſh, I live by the Faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himſelf for me.*

Holy] though it be included in the Word *Sacrifice*, is not in the Greek θυσία, and was therefore added without *verbal tautology*. And there were, however, no *real one*. For there is an *holineſs* that ſtands in *an entire rectitude of heart and life*, by which we are conformed, in both, to the Nature and Will of God, beſides the *relative one* which redounds upon any Perſon or Thing, by due Dedication to him. And which former

mer is prerequired, *in the preſent Sacrifice*, that it may be, as it follows, *acceptable to God*] not as though *thereby* it became acceptable, but as that *without which* it is not ſo. Yet alſo *holineſs*, in the nature of the thing, cannot but be grateful to God or well-pleaſing (as the word here uſed εὐάρεστον ſignifies) but not ſo as to reconcile a Perſon to him, who was, before, a Sinner, and hath ſtill ſin in him. But ſuppoſing the State of ſuch a Perſon firſt made, and continued good, that reſemblance of himſelf cannot but be pleaſing in the Eyes of God, but fundamentally and ſtatedly in and for *Chriſt*, as 1 *Pet.* 2. 5. (before quoted.) This therefore ſignifies, both how ready God is to be well pleaſed with ſuch a Sacrifice, and alſo ſignifies the quality of the Sacrifice it ſelf, that it is apt to pleaſe.

Reaſonable ſervice] or *worſhip*, as the word ſignifies. This is alſo ſpoken accommodately, to the notion given before of *offering our ſelves*, in oppoſition *to the former victims* wherein Beaſts were the matter of the Sacrifice. *Thoſe* were *brute Sacrifices*. You (*d. d.*) are to offer *reaſonable ones*. And it ſignifies, our Minds and Underſtandings the Seat of Reaſon, with our Wills and Affections that are to be governed by it, muſt all be Ingredient as the matter of that Sacrifice. Implying alſo the right God hath in us, whence nothing can be more

more reaſonable than to offer our ſelves to him.

Preſent] that is, dedicate, devote your ſelves, ſet your ſelves before God, as they *ſiſtere ad Altare*, *preſent at the Altar*, the deſtin'd Sacrifices, make them ſtand ready for immolation. You are ſo to make a tender of your ſelves as if you would ſay, "Lord, "here I am, wholly thine. I come to ſur- "render my ſelf, my whole Life and Be- "ing, to be entirely, and always, at thy "diſpoſe, and for thy uſe. Accept a de- "voted, ſelf-reſigning Soul!

Thus we are brought to the *thing it ſelf*. Which now,

2. In the next place (with leſs regard to the alluſive terms) we come more diſtinctly to open, and explain. It is briefly but the *dedicating of our ſelves*. Or as it is 2 *Cor.* 8. 5. The *giving our own ſelves* to the Lord. So thoſe *Macedonian* Converts are ſaid to have done. And there is a ſpecial notice to be taken therein of the word [firſt] which puts a remarkableneſs upon that Paſſage. The Apoſtle is commending their liberal Charity towards indigent neceſſitous Chriſtians. And ſhews how their *Charity* was begun in *Piety*. They did not only, moſt freely *give away their ſubſtance*, for the relief of ſuch as were in want, but *firſt* they *gave their own ſelves to the Lord.*

But

But that we may not miſconceive the *nature of this act*, of *giving our ſelves*, we muſt know, it is not *donation*, in the ſtrict, and proper ſenſe; ſuch as *confers a right* upon the *Donee*, or to him to whom a thing is ſaid to be given. We cannot be ſaid to *collate*, or *transfer a right* to him, who is, before, *Dominus abſolutus*; The only Proprietor and Supreme Lord of all. It is more properly but a *tradition*, a ſurrender or delivery of our ſelves, upon the ſuppoſal, and acknowledgment of his *former right*. Or the *putting our ſelves into his Poſſeſſion*, for his appointed Uſes and Services, out of which we had *injuriouſly* kept our ſelves before. 'Tis but *giving him his own*, 1 *Chron.* 29. 14. *All things come of thee, and of thine own have we given thee.* It is only a *conſent*, and *obedience* to his *moſt rightful claim*, and demand of us, or a *yielding our ſelves* to him, as it is ſignificantly expreſt in the mentioned 6 to the *Rom.* 13. Though there the Word is the ſame with that in the *Text*, which here we read *preſent*. παρίςημι, or παριςάνω

And now that we may more diſtinctly open the nature of this *Self-dedication*, we ſhall ſhew what ought to accompany and qualifie it, that we may be a ſuitable and grateful Preſent to him, in Evangelical acceptation, *worthy of God*, ſuch as he requires, and will accept.

1. It

It muſt be done *with knowledge, and underſtanding.* It cannot but be *an intelligent act.* 'Tis an act of *Religion* and *Worſhip*, as it is called in the Text (*Service* we read it, which is much more general, but the Word is λατρεία, *worſhip*) 'Tis indeed the firſt and fundamental act of worſhip. And it is required to be a *rational act. Your reaſonable ſervice.* Religion cannot move blindfold. And though *Knowledge* and *Reaſon* are not throughout words of the ſame ſignification, and latitude; yet the former is partly preſuppoſed upon the latter, and partly improved by it, nor can therefore be ſever'd from it.

In the preſent caſe it is eſpecially neceſſary we *diſtinctly* know, and *apprehend* the ſtate of things between God and us. That we *underſtand* our ſelves to have been (with the reſt of Men) in an *apoſtacy*, and revolt from God, that we are recalled unto him, that a Mediator is appointed on purpoſe thorough whom we are to approach him, and render our ſelves back unto him. That ſo this may be our ſenſe in our return, "*Lord*, I have here brought thee back a "*ſtray*, a *wandring Creature*, *mine own ſelf.* "I have heard what the Redeemer, of thy "own conſtituting hath done and ſuffered "for the reconciling and reducing of ſuch, "and, *againſt thy known deſign*, I can no "longer withhold my ſelf.

2. With

2. With *ſerious Conſideration.* It muſt be *a deliberate Act.* How many *underſtand* Matters of greateſt Importance, which they never *conſider*, and periſh *by not conſidering what they know!*

Conſideration is nothing elſe but the *revolving of what we knew before.* The actuating the habitual Knowledge we had of Things. A more diſtinct reviewing of our former Notices belonging to any Caſe, a recollecting and gathering them up, a comparing them together; and, for ſuch as appear more Momentous, a repeating, and inculcating them upon our ſelves, that we may be urg'd on to ſuitable Action. And this, though *of it ſelf*, without the Power, and Influence of the *Divine Spirit*, is not *ſufficient*, yet being the Means he Works by, is *moſt neceſſary* to our *becoming Chriſtians*, i. e. if we ſpeak of becoming ſo, not *by fate*, or *by chance*, as too many only are, but by our own *Choice and Deſign.* Which is the ſame Thing with *dedicating our ſelves to God through Chriſt*, whereof we are diſcourſing. For upon our having thus conſidered and comprehended the whole Compaſs of the Caſe in our Thoughts, either the Temper of our Hearts would be ſuch that we would, hereupon, dedicate our ſelves, or we would not; if we would, it is becauſe we ſhould judge the *Arguments for it* more weighty than the *Objections*, which,

which, without ſuch pondering of both, we are not likely to apprehend, and ſo, for want of this *Conſideration*, are never likely to become *Chriſtians at all.* Or, if we would not, it is becauſe to the more carnal Temper of our Hearts, the *Objections* would outweigh. And then, if we do ſeem to Conſent, it is becauſe *what is to be Objected* came not in view. And ſo we ſhould be *Chriſtians to no Purpoſe.* Our Contract with the Redeemer were void in the making, we ſhould only ſeem pleaſed with the Terms of Chriſtianity, becauſe we have not digeſted them in our Thoughts. So our Act undoes it ſelf in the very doing. It carries an *implicit, virtual Repentance* in it, of what is done. We enter our ſelves Chriſtians, upon ſurprize, or miſtake. And if we had conſidered what we are, conſequently, to do, what to forbear, what to forego, what to endure, would not have done it. And therefore when we do come diſtinctly to apprehend all this, are like *actually to Repent* and Revolt. As they *John* 6. who while they underſtood not what it was to be a Chriſtian, ſeem'd very forward followers of *Chriſt.* But when they did more fully underſtand it, upon his telling them plainly, *went back and walked no more with him.* And he lets them go (*q. d.*) "mend your ſelves if you can, ſee "where you can get you a better Maſter.

3. With

3. With *a determinate Judgment*, at length, that *this ought to be done.* There are two extreams in this Matter. *Some* will *not conſider at all*, and *ſo* not do this Thing; and *ſome* will *conſider always*, and *ſo*, never do it. Stand, *Shall I? Shall I?* Halt between Two Opinions. Theſe are both of them very vicious and faulty Extreams in Reference to the Management even of Secular Affairs, botth of them contrary to that Prudence which ſhould govern our Actions, *i. e.* when Men will never conſider what is neceſſary to be done, and ſo neglect their moſt important Concernments; or, when they will never have done conſidering, which is the ſame Thing, as if they had never taken up any Thought of the Matter at all. Indeed, in the preſent Caſe, 'tis a Reproach to the bleſſed God to conſider longer, than till we have well digeſted the ſtate of the Caſe. As if it were difficulty to determine the Matter, between him and the Devil, which were the better, or more rightful Lord! We muſt at laſt be at a Point, and come to a judicious Determination of the Queſtion. As thoſe ſincerely reſolved Chriſtians had done, *John* 6. 68, 69. Who alſo expreſs the Reaſons that had (before that Time no doubt) determined them. *Lord, whither ſhall we go? Thou haſt the Words of Eternal Life. And we believe, and are ſure, that*

thou art that Chriſt, the Son of the Living God.

4. With *Liberty of Spirit*, having thrown off all former Bonds, and quite diſingaged our ſelves from other Maſters. As they ſpeak, *Iſa.* 26. 13. *Other Lords beſides thee have had Dominion over us, but by thee only will we make mention of thy Name.* For our Saviour expreſly tells us, *No Man can ſerve Two Maſters*, Mat. 6. 24. When thoſe *Livius, l.* 1. *Deditii* the People of *Collatia*, were about the Buſineſs of Capitulating in order to the ſurrender of themſelves, the Queſtion put, on the *Romans* part was, *Eſtne Populus Collatinus in ſua poteſtate? Are the Collatine People in their own Power?* Wherein Satisfaction being given, the Matter is concluded. In the preſent Caſe of yielding our ſelves to God, the Queſtion cannot be concerning any previous Tie *in Point of Right*, or that could urge Conſcience. There cannot be ſo much as a plauſible pretender, againſt him. But there muſt be a *Liberty*, in Oppoſition to *preingaged Inclinations, and Affections.* And this muſt be the Senſe of the ſincere Soul, intreating the Matter of its *Self-ſurrender*, and Dedication, with the great God, to be able to ſay to the Queſtion, *Art thou under no former contrary Bonds?* "Lord, I am under none, I know, that *ought* to bind "me, or *that juſtly can*, againſt thy former

"Sove-

" Sovereign Right. I had indeed ſuffered
" other Bonds to take Place in my Heart,
" and the Affections of my Soul, but they
" were *Bonds of Iniquity*, which I ſcruple
" not to break, and Repent that ever I
" made, I took my ſelf indeed to be my
" own, and have liv'd to my ſelf, only
" pleas'd and ſerv'd and ſought my ſelf, as
" if I were Created and Born for no o-
" ther Purpoſe, and if the Senſe of my
" Heart had been put into Words, there
" was Inſolence enough to have conceiv'd
" ſuch as theſe; not *my Tongue* only, but
" my whole Man, Body and Soul, all my
" Parts and Powers, my Eſtate and Name,
" and Strength, and Time, *are all my own*;
" *who is Lord over me?* And while I pleas'd
" ſelf with ſuch an imagined Liberty, and
" Self-dominion, no Idol was too deſpi-
" cable to Command my Homage. I have
" done worſe than proſtrated my Body to
" a Stock, my Soul hath humbled it ſelf,
" and bow'd down to a Clod of Clay.
" My Thoughts, and Deſires, and Hopes,
" and Joies have all ſtoopt to ſo mean Tri-
" fles, as Wealth, or Eaſe, or Pleaſure, or
" Fame, all but ſo many Fragments of
" Earth, or (the leſs conſiſtent) Vapours
" ſprung from it. And whereas this World
" is nothing elſe but a bundle of Luſts,
" none of them was too baſe to Rule me.
" And while I Thought my ſelf at Liber-

" ty, *I have been a Servant to Corruption.*
" But now, Lord, I have, through thy
" Mercy learnt to abandon and abhor my
" ſelf. Thy *Grace appearing, hath taught*
" *me to deny Ungodlineſs and worldly Luſts.*
" Thou haſt overcome, enjoy thine own
" Conqueſt. I am griev'd for it, and Re-
" pent from my Soul that ever I did put
" thee to contend for, and Conquer thine
" own. And ſo doth this *Self-dedication* carry in it *Repentance from dead Works, and towards God.*

5. With *a Plenary full Bent of Heart and Will.* As that, *I have ſworn, and will perform, that I will keep thy Righteous Judgments,* Pſalm 119. 106. Or, that, *I have inclin'd my Heart, to keep thy Statutes always unto the end,* ver. 112. And herein doth this *Self-Dedication* more principally conſiſt, *viz. in a reſolved willingneſs,* to yield my ſelf, as God's own Property, to be *for him, and not for another.* Which *reſolvedneſs of Will,* though it may, in ſeveral Reſpects, admit of ſeveral Names, or be clothed with diſtinct Notions, is but one and the ſame *ſubſtantial Act.* It may be called, in *reſpect of the Competition* which there was in the Caſe, *Choice.* Or in reſpect of the *Propoſal* made to me of ſuch a Thing to be done, *Conſent.* But theſe are, abſtracting from theſe References, the *ſame Act,* which, in it ſelf conſidered, is only a *reſolute Volition.*

tion. I will be the Lords. Which Reſolution, if one do, (whether *mentally* or *vocally*) direct to God or *Chriſt*, then it puts on the Nature of a *Vow*; and ſo is fitly called *devoting one ſelf.*

It carries in it, as a Thing ſuppoſed, the implanted Divine Life and Nature, whereby we are truly ſaid to *preſent our ſelves living Sacrifices*, as in the Text, or as it is expreſt in that other Place, *Chap.* 6. 13. *To yield our ſelves to God, as thoſe that are alive from the Dead*; (as verſ. 11.) *alive to God thorough Chriſt Jeſus our Lord.* Which Life is not to be underſtood *ſimply*, but *in a certain Reſpect.* For *before*, we were not dead *ſimply*, we were not dead, diſinclin'd, or diſaffected to *every Thing*, but peculiarly *towards God and his Chriſt. That way* we were without any Inclination, Motion, Tendency, or Diſpoſition. And ſo were Dead *quoad hoc*, as to this Thing, or in this Reſpect. Were *alienated from the Life of God.* Now we come to live *this Life*, and are made by his Grace to incline and move *towards him*, of our own Accord. *Dead Things* (or deſtitute of Life) may be moved by another, are capable of being mov'd *violently*, without, or againſt Inclination, hither, or thither. But a *Living Creature* can ſpontaneouſly *move it ſelf*, as, of its own Accord, it inclines.

And whereas there are two more noble

Principles, that belong to this *Divine Life* and *Nature*, *Faith* and *Love*. (A great and noted Pair as may be ſeen in divers Places of the *New Teſtament*) Theſe have *both*, an ingrediency into this *Self-Dedication*. The Nature of each of them runs into it, and may be perceived in it. And it is hereupon a *mixt Act*, partaking an Influence, and Tincture (as it were) from the one and the other of them.

Faith reſpects the *Promiſes* of God, and what we are, thereupon, to expect from him. And ſo *our dedicating our ſelves*, to God, is a *ſelf-committing*. We give up our ſelves to him as a Truſt, as the Apoſtles emphatical Expreſſion intimates. *I know whom I have believed, and I am perſwaded that he will keep that which I have committed unto him* (παραθηκην μου) my *pawn* or *pledge*, my *fidei Commiſſum againſt that Day*. The Soul flies to God as *in a Diſtreſs*, not knowing to be ſafe another way. As once a People, not able to obtain Tutelage on other Terms, ſurrender'd themſelves to them whoſe help they ſought, with ſome ſuch Expreſſion, *Si non noſtros, ſaltem veſtros*. If not *as ours*, yet at leaſt *as your own*, ſave, protect, and defend us. Nor, in our *ſurrendring our ſelves* to God, is this any way unſuitable, either *to us*, or *to him*. Not *to us*; for we are *really diſtreſſed*, ready to periſh; 'tis agreeable to the ſtate of our Caſe.

2 Tim. 1. 12.

Caſe. Not *to him*; for it is *glorious to him.* A Thing *worthy of God* to be a Refuge, and Sanctuary to periſhing Souls; and is thereupon a *pleaſant Thing*, a *Godlike Pleaſure*, ſuitable to a *ſelf-ſufficient*, and *all-ſufficient* Being, who hath enough *for himſelf*, and *for all others*, whom he ſhall have taught not to *deſpiſe the Riches of his Goodneſs. He taketh Pleaſure in them that fear him, and them that hope in his Mercy*, Pſalm 147. 11. *He waits that he may be gracious, and is exalted in ſhewing Mercy*, Iſa. 30. 18. He lifts up himſelf when he does it, and waits that he may; expects the Opportunity, ſeeks out meet and ſuitable Objects (as with Thirſt and Appetite, an enterpriſing, valiant Man is wont to do Encounters, for none were ever ſo intent to deſtroy, as he is to ſave) yea, *makes them*, prepares them for his Purpoſe. Which he doth not, and needs not do, *in Point of Miſery*, ſo they can enough prepare themſelves; But in *Point of Humility*, ſenſe of their Neceſſity and Unworthineſs, great need, and no Deſert, nor Diſpoſition to ſupplicate.

Theſe are needful Preparations, make it *decorous*, and *comely* to him to ſhew Mercy. A God *is to be ſought*, with humble, proſtrate Veneration. And ſuch an Opportunity *he waits for.* 'Tis not fit for him, not *Great*, *not Majeſtick*, to throw away his Mercies, upon inſolent, and inſenſible Wretches.

For, as there it follows, *he is the God of Judgment*, a moſt accurate, judicious *Wiſdom*, and *Prudence* conducts and guides all the Emanations of his flowing Goodneſs. The part of which Wiſdom and Judgment is to nick the Opportunity, to take the fit Seaſon, when Mercy will be moſt fitly plac't, beſt attain its end, reliſh beſt, be moſt *acceptable* to them that ſhall *receive* it, and *honourable* to him that *ſhews* it. And therefore (as is added) *bleſſed are they that wait for him*, that labour to be in a Poſture to meet him, on his own Terms, and in his own Way.

Let ſuch as have a Mind to ſurrender and yield themſelves to him conſider this. Apprehend you have undone your ſelves, and are loſt. Fall before him. Lie at the Foot-ſtool of the Mercy-ſeat. Willingly *put your Mouths in the Duſt, if ſo be there may be Hope.* And there is Hope. He ſeeks after you, and will not reject what he ſeeks, he only waited to bring you to this. 'Tis now a *fit Time* for him, and a *good Time* for you. And you may now, in reſigning, intruſt your ſelves, alſo, to him. For his expreſs Promiſe is your ſufficient Ground for it. *I will receive you, and be a Father to you, and ye ſhall be my Sons and Daughters.* 2 Cor. 6. Underſtand the Matter aright; your preſenting, and yielding your ſelves to him is not to be a *deſperate Act*. 'Tis not caſting your ſelves away. You are not throwing

ing your ſelf into flames, but upon tender Mercies, *thither* you *may commit* your ſelf. The Thing that *is pleaſing to him*, and which he invites you to (as he invites all the ends of the Earth to look to him that they may be ſaved) cannot be *unſafe*, or *unhappy to you.* *Iſa.* 45. 22.

Again, *Love* hath a great ingrediency into this ſelf-reſignation. And *as it hath*, ſo it more admits to be called *dedicating*, or *devoting our ſelves.*

This Holy, ingenuous Principle reſpects more the *Commands of God*, as the other doth *his Promiſes*, and Eyes *his Intereſt*, as the other doth *our own*. *This* Dedition of our ſelves, *as it is influenc't by it*, deſigns the doing all for him we can, as, *by the other* it doth the receiving all. As by the other, we reſign our ſelves to him for *ſafety* and *felicity*; ſo we do, by this for *Service* and *Duty* to our uttermoſt. And an ardent Lover of God thinks this a little Oblation. My ſelf? Alas! What am I? Too ſmall a thing for him, who is *all love*, and who, though he hath it in hand to tranſform, and turn me into *love* too, ſuch as ſo droſſy, and limited a thing was capable of being made. How mean, yet, and little is the Subject he hath to Work upon! An Atom of Duſt! Not Combuſtible, or apt to be Wrought upon to this (to a Divine and Heavenly Love) by any, but

but his Flame. And now therefore but a minute Spark from the Element of Love, that muſt, however, thus transform'd, tend towards its own Original and Native Seat! It ſhall now flame upward. And this is *all the flame*, in which it is *univerſally neceſſary*, thy Sacrifice ſhould aſcend. Which will refine only, not conſume it. Though, that it may be offer'd up in *other flames*, is *not impoſſible*; nor will it be much regretted by you; if the caſe ſhould ſo require, nor ſhall be deſpiſed by him, if he ſhall ſo ſtate the caſe. To *give the body to be burned*, without *love*, goes for nothing But if, *in that way*, we were called to offer up *our bodies*, *living Sacrifices to God*, it would (in an inferiour ſenſe) be an *offering of a ſweet ſmelling ſavour*, would even perfume Heaven, and diffuſe fragrant Odours on Earth. Nor would be grudg'd at by *that love* that firſt made our ὁλόκληρον the whole of our ſelves, an offering to God. And whoſe property it is to be all things, to do all things, to bear all things, to endure all things for him, whoſe we wholly are. So that if he deſign any of us to be an ὁλοκάυςωμα too; an whole burnt offering, and will have to *glorifie him in the fire*, Love will not retract its Vow. But ſay, after *our great Pattern*, *Not my Will but thine be done*: And as he, in his peculiar caſe, and deſign (not communicable with us, though the

the temper of Spirit ſhould be) *Lo I come to do thy will, O God.* A *body haſt thou* (it now appears for this very purpoſe) *prepared for me.* He *loved us*, and *gave himſelf for us.* So are we, from *our love of him*, to *give our ſelves for him*, and his Uſe and Service, in whatſoever kind he ſhall appoint and preſcribe. Every true Chriſtian is, in the preparation of his Mind a Martyr. But they are few whom he actually calls to it. Our *love* is ordinarily to ſhew it ſelf in our *keeping his Commandments.* And, with that deſign, we are to *preſent our ſelves* to him, as the *reſolved, ready Inſtruments* of his Service and Praiſe. As *Rom.* 6. 13. *Neither yeild ye your members as Inſtruments of unrighteouſneſs unto Sin: But yield your ſelves unto God as thoſe that are alive from the dead, and your members as Inſtruments of Righteouſneſs unto God.*

Thus having been more large upon what was more Eſſential, in this Dedication of our ſelves, I ſhall be briefer in moſt of the other things belonging to it.

6. It muſt, further, be done *with a concomitant acceptance of God.* His *Covenant* (which is now enter'd) is oftentimes ſumm'd up, *I will be your God, and you ſhall be my People.* And is reſembled, and frequently repreſented by the *nuptial contract*, In which there is *mutual giving, and taken.* We are to reſign, and accept at the ſame time.

time. To take him to be our God, when we yield our ſelves to be his.

7. *With an explicite reference to the Lord Chriſt.* We are to Dedicate our ſelves, after the tenour of a Covenant whereof *he is the Mediatour.* God doth not, upon other terms, treat with Sinners. You are not to offer at ſuch a thing as dedicating your ſelves to him, but in the way, and upon the terms, upon which you are to be accepted. The divine pleaſure is declared and known, how *great a one*, he muſt be in all the tranſactions of God, with men; yea, and towards the whole Creation, *Epheſ.* 1. 6, 7, 8, 9, 10. *He hath made us accepted in the beloved. In whom we have Redemption through his Blood, the forgiveneſs of Sins, according to the Riches of his Grace. Wherein he hath abounded towards us in all Wiſdom and Prudence. Having made known unto us the Myſtery of his Will, according to his good Pleaſure, which he had purpoſed in himſelf. That in the diſpenſation of the fullneſs of times, he might gather together in one all things in Chriſt, both which are in Heaven, and which are on Earth, even in him.* We muſt take heed how we neglect, or over-look him, who is by divine appointment ſo high in Power, and with whom we have ſo great a concern:

8. *With deep humility*, and *abaſement of our ſelves*, in conjunction with a *profound* Re-

Reverence and *Veneration* of the Divine Majeſty. There ought to be the lowlieſt ſelf-abaſement, ſuch as that good Man Expreſſes, *Ezra* 9. 6. (varied to ones one caſe) *O my God, I am aſhamed, and bluſh to lift up my Face, to Thee, my God: For mine Iniquities are increaſed over mine Head, and my Treſpaſs is grown up unto the Heavens,* And indeed this is naturally conſequent, upon what was laſt ſaid, of the regard that ought to be had, in this matter, to the *Mediatour.* For ſurely *that very Conſtitution,* is, in it ſelf, an *humbling* thing to us. And we cannot apply our ſelves to God *ſuitably to it,* but with a ſelf-abaſing Senſe of our own State and Caſe. Our *coming,* and *tendring* our ſelves *to God, in a Mediatour,* is, in its very nature, an *humiliation*; and carries with it a tacit Confeſſion, that *in our ſelves* we have nothing, deſerve nothing, are nothing, are worſe than nothing. And that only this Conſtitution of his could juſtifie our offering our ſelves to him, *with any hope of acceptance.* Or make it leſs than an inſolent preſumption, for *Sinners* to approach him and expect to be received into his *Preſence,* and *Service.* It is not for *ſuch as we,* to behave our ſelves towards him, as if we either had not Offended, or were capable of expiating our own offence. Yea, and if there had been nothing of delinquency in the caſe; yet

yet great Humility becomes ſuch Applications to him. And *that* in conjunction with the *profoundeſt Reverence and Veneration of him.* For our very buſineſs in this *Self-dedication*, is *Worſhip* (as the word in the Text hath been noted to ſignifie.) And it is the *firſt* and moſt principal Part of all the Worſhip we owe to him, (as was noted from 2 *Cor.* 8. 5.) Fundamental to all the reſt. We muſt have before our Eyes the *awful Majeſty* and *glorious greatneſs of God.* Which Scripture often ſpeaks of, as *one Notion* of his *Holineſs*, and which we are to have principal Reference unto in all the ſolemn Homage we pay to him; as *Sacrifices* are well obſerved to have been offered to him *ſo conſidered.* And therefore, *by this conſideration*, their ſuitableneſs to him is to be meaſured, as he doth himſelf inſiſt, *Mal.* 1. 14. *Curſed be the deceiver, which hath in his Flock a Male, and voweth and ſacrificeth unto the Lord a corrupt thing*, for I am a great King, *ſaith the Lord of Hoſts, and my Name is dreadful among the Heathen.*

Outr. *de Sac.*

9. *With great joy and gladneſs of Heart.* It ought to be accompanied with the higheſt guſts and reliſhes of pleaſure, both *from the apprehenſive congruity of the thing*, and the *expectation we have of acceptance.* The *thing it ſelf* ſhould be pleaſant to us. We are to do it as *taſting* our *own act*, as the

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did, 1 *Chron.* 29. 9. *The people rejoiced for that they offered willingly.* The ſelf-devoting Perſon ſhould be able to utter this as his Senſe, " Glad am I, that I am any " thing, that I have a being, a Soul, a " reaſonable intelligent being, capable of " becoming a Sacrifice to him. And that there is hope of being accepted; How great a Joy is that? The Apoſtle makes ſo great a thing of it, that he ſpeaks, 2 *Cor.* 5. 8, 9. as if he cared not whether he was *in the body*, or *out of the body*, *ſo he might be accepted.* *Nuptials* (that reſemble, as hath been ſaid, this Tranſaction between God and the Soul, wherein there is mutual *Giving* and *Accepting*) are wont to be Seaſons of great feſtivity and gladneſs. The great God himſelf rejoices in this cloſure, with *ſuch a joy*, (*Iſa.* 62. 5. *As a bridegroom rejoiceth over his bride, ſo will thy God rejoice over thee*) and *ſhall not we?* How Infinitely more aimable and delectable is the Object of *our Choice* than *his.* When *we* are to rejoice in the *ſupream and moſt perfect Excellency.* *He*, in what is cloathed over (if he did not ſuperinduce *another Cloathing*) with moſt *loathſome deformity.*

10. *With an ingenuous candour and ſimplicity, with* that *ſincerity* which is to be as the *Salt of our Sacrifice*, (Mark 9.) Without latent reſerves, or an hidden meaning, diſagreeing to his. Which were both unjuſt

juſt and vain. *Unjuſt*; for we *may not* deceive *any*. And *Vain*; for we *cannot* deceive *him*. The caſe admits not of reſtrictions, it muſt be done abſolutely, without any limitation, or reſerve. You have heard this *Self-dedication* is, in part, an *act of love*. And what *limit* can *be ſet* to a *love*, whoſe Object is *Infinite*? A *natural* limit 'tis true, as it is the love of a Creature, it cannot but have; but a *choſen* one it ought never to have, as if we had lov'd enough. You know what kind of love is, (and cannot but be) due to the *all comprehending God*. *With all thy Heart, Soul, Mind* and *Might*, &c. So without *exception*, that *Maimonides*, reciting thoſe Words, adds *etiamſi tollat animam tuam*. The ſtream of thy love to him muſt not be diverted, or alter courſe, *tho' he would take away thy very Life, or Soul.*

De fund. legis. pag. 64.

11. *With the concomitant ſurrender to him of all that we have.* For they that, by their own act, and acknowledgment, are not *themſelves*, *their own*, but devoted, muſt alſo acknowledge they are *owners* of nothing elſe. In that mentioned *form of Surrender* in *Livie*, when *Egerius*, on the

Romans

Romans Part had enquired, *Are you the Embaſſadours ſent by the People of* Collatia *that you may yield up your ſelves and the Collatine People?* And it was anſweted, *we are.* And it was again askt. *Are the Collatin People in their own Power?* And anſwered, *they are.* It is further enquired, *Do you deliver up your ſelves, the People of* Collatia, *your City, your Fields, your Water, your Bounds, your Temples, your Utenſils, all Things that are yours, both Divine and Humane, into mine, and the People of* Romes *Power?* They ſay, *we deliver up all.* And he Anſwers, *So I receive you.* So do they who deliver up themſelves to God, much more, all that they called theirs. God indeed is the only *Proprietor*, Men are but *uſufructuaries.* They have the *uſe* of what his Providence allots them; He reſerves to himſelf the *Property*; and *limits* the *uſe ſo far*, as that all are to be accountable to him for all they poſſeſs. And are to uſe nothing they have, but as under him, and for him, as alſo they are to do themſelves. Therefore as they are required to glorifie him with their *Bodies, and Spirits which are his*, ſo they are to *Honour him with their Subſtance*, upon the ſame Reaſon. But few Effectually appre-

Eſtiſne vos legati Oratoreſque miſſi à Populo Collatino, ut vos populumque Collatinum dederitis? Sumus —— Deditiſne vos, populum Collatinum, urbem, agros, aquam, terminos, delubra, utenſilia divina, humanaque omnia, in meam populique Romani ditionem? Dedimus. At ego recipio Liv. *ubi prius.*

hend his Right in their Persons; which, as we are therefore to recognize, in this Dedication of our selves to him; so we are, *in a like general Sense*, to devote to him all that we enjoy in the World. That is, as all are not to devote themselves *specially to serve him in a sacred Office*; but all are obliged to devote themselves to his Service *in the general:* So, though all are not required to devote their Estates, to *this or that particular pious Use*, they are obliged to use them wholly *for his Glory*, *in the general*, and for the Service of his Interest in the World. We are obliged neither to withhold from him, nor mispend, these his Mercies; but must *live righteously* (wherein *Charity* is comprehended) *soberly* and *godly* in it, decline no Opportunities that shall occur to us, (within the Compass of our own Sphere, and Station) of doing him (tho' never so costly, and hazardous) Service, must forsake all and follow him, when our Duty, and our continued Possessions of this Worlds Goods, come to be inconsistent; must submit patiently to our Lot, when that falls out to be our Case; or to any Providence by which we are bereaved of our worldly Comforts, with that Temper of Mind, as to be able chearfully to say, *The Lord hath given, the Lord hath taken away, blessed be the Name of the Lord.*

It

It is indeed the greateſt Abſurdity imaginable, that they who are not *Maſters of themſelves*, ſhould think it permitted them, to uſe what comes to their Hands, *as they Liſt*; for the Service of their own Luſts, and the gratifying of a rebel Fleſh, that hath rejected the Government of their own Reaſon, and of all Divine Laws at once. Or that *he* who hath ſo abſolute a *Right in them*, ſhould not have *that Right in what he hath committed to them*, as to preſcribe Rules to them, by which to uſe and imploy it. At the ſame Time, and in the ſame Senſe, wherein we make a *Dedition* of our ſelves; We do the ſame Thing as to all that we have. Even according to common, humane Eſtimate, according to what Intereſt Men have in others, or Power over them, they have a correſpondent Intereſt in what they poſſeſs. They that *abſolutely ſurrender themſelves* to the Power of another, leave not themſelves capable of proper Dominion as to any Thing. Therefore ſays the *Civil Law*, *Non licet Dedititiis Teſtamenta facere.* They were ſo under ſeveral Notions 'tis true, but they that were ſtrictly ſo, *had not Power to make a Will*, as having nothing to diſpoſe of. No Man has certainly a Power to diſpoſe of any thing (and when they ſurrender themſelves by their own Act and Deed to God, they acknowledge ſo much) otherwiſe than as *Divine Rules direct*, or *permit*.

They have a Right in what is *duly theirs*, againſt the *Counter-claim of Man*, but none, ſure, againſt the *claim*, and all diſpoſing Power of God, whether ſignify'd by his Law, or by his Providence. Therefore with this Temper of Mind ſhould this *Self-Dedication* be made. "Lord I here lay my "my ſelf, and all that belongs to me, moſt "entirely at thy Feet. *All Things are of* "*thee* (as they are brought in ſaying who make that willing joyful Offering, 1 *Chron.* 29.) "What I have in the World is more "*thine*, than *mine*. I deſire neither to *uſe*, "nor *poſſeſs* any thing, *but by thy leave*, and "*for thy ſake*.

12. *With befitting circumſtantial Solemnity*, *i. e.* it ought to be *direct*, *expreſs* and *explicite*. Not to be hudled up in *tacit*, *mute Intimations* only. We ſhould not Content our ſelves that it be no more than imply'd, in what we *do otherwiſe*. And run on with it as a Thing that muſt be *ſuppos'd*, and *taken for granted*, never *actually performed and done*.

It is very true indeed that a *continued*, *uniform*, *courſe* and *ſeries* of agreeable Actions, *an Holy Life*, and *Practice* carries a great deal more of ſignificancy with it, than only *having once ſaid*, without this, *concepti verbis*, *Lord*, *I will be thine*. *Practice*, whether it be good, or bad, more fully ſpeaks our Senſe, and expreſſes our Hearts,

than

n bare Words, ſpoken *at ſome particular me*, can do. For *they* at the moſt ſpeak t our *preſent Senſe at that Time*, and, per-ps, do not always *that*; but a *courſe of actice* ſhews the habitual poſture and ady bent of our Spirits.

Nor do I think that a *formal explicite anſaction*, in this Matter, whether *Vocal Mental*, with circumſtantial Solemnity, eſſential to a Man's being a Chriſtian, or Holy Man. A fixed Inclination and nt of Heart towards God, followed (as will be) with a Courſe of Practice be-ming them that are his, will no doubt nclude a Man's ſtate to be ſafe and good od-ward. As one may, on the other nd, be the Devils Servant all his Days, thout having made a *formal Covenant* with m.

But yet, though ſo explicit, and ſolemn Tranſaction of this Matter be not *eſſential our Chriſtianity* (as what is ſaid to belong ly to the *Solemnity* of any Thing, is there-imply'd not to be of the Eſſence of it) t it may be *a great Duty* for all that, and doubt it not to be ſo.

And it may *here* be worth the while, to iſt a little; that, if this indeed be *a Du-* it may obtain more *in our Practice*, than, rhaps it doth. Some, thorough meer in-imadvertency, may not have conſidered others that have, may poſſibly think it

less needful, because they reckon it was *formerly* done for them. They were born *Christian Parents*, who Dedicated them God from their Birth; and they were, *Solemnity*, presented to him *in their Bapti* What need we, then, do *over again*, Thing already done?

Let us Reason this Matter therefore while, and consider whether, notwithstan ing any such Allegation, *Our Personal dicating our selves to God, in Christ*, be still reasonable, and necessary to be perfor ed *by our selves also*, as our own solem Act and Deed?

It were, indeed, much to be wisht, th our *Baptismal Dedication* to God were mo Minded, and Thought on, than it co monly is. When, with such sacred Sole nity, we were devoted to the *Trinune De* and those great and awful Names were m med upon us, the Name of the *Father*, t Name of the *Son*, and the Name of the *ly Ghost*. Baptisms are, it is to be fear too often in the Christian World, turn into a *meer Pageantry*, and the Matter sca ever Thought on more, when the *shew over*. And, very probably, because t *great Succedaneous Duty* is so unpracti among Christians.

And first, Let it be considered, Are the no like Cases? Do we not know that, th all the Infants in a Kingdom, are born Su

ject

jects; yet, when they arrive to a certain Age, they are obliged, being called, to take the *Oath of Allegiance*, and each one to come under *Personal Obligation* to their *Prince*; and do we owe less to the God that made us, and the Lord that bought us with his Blood?

Again, Though all the *Sons of Israelites*, were, in their Infancy, dedicated to God by the *then appointed Rite for that Purpose*; yet how frequent were their *Solemn, Personal Recognitions* of his Covenant; their *avouching* themselves *to be his People*, as he also *avoucht* himself *to be their God*. Which we see *Deut.* 26. and in many other Places.

'Tis remote from me to intend the pressing of *a Covenant*, that contains any *disputable*, or *doubtful* Matters; or *any other* than the *Substance of our Baptismal Covenant* it self; consisting of the *known Essentials* of our Christianity; all summ'd up *in taking God in Christ for our God*, and *resigning our selves to him to be inviolably his*. No more is meant than, that *this may be done, as our own reasonable Service, and Worship*; as *our intelligent, deliberate, judicious Act, and Choice*.

And consider further, to this Purpose, the *great Importance of the Thing* it self, compared with the *lesser Concernments*, wherein we use to deal *most explicitely*. Is it fit that a Man's *Religion* should be *less* the *Mat-*

ter of his ſolemn Choice, than his inferiour Concerns? That when he *chooſes* his *Dwelling*, his *Calling*, his *Servant*, or *Maſter*, he ſhould ſeem *thrown upon his God*, and his *Religion*, *by Chance?* And that *leaſt* ſhould appear of *Caution*, *Care*, and *punctual Dealing*, in our very *greateſt Concernment?* How great a Day in a Man's Life doth he count his *Marriage-Day?* How *Accurate* are Men wont to be, in all the *Preparations*, and *previous Settlements*, that are to be made in Order to it!

And ſince the great God is pleaſed to be ſo *very Particular* with us, in *propoſing* the *Model*, and *Contents* of his *Covenant*, the *Promiſes*, and *Precepts*, which make *his Part*, and *ours* in it; how *Attentive* ſhould we be to his *Propoſals*, and how *Expreſs* in our Conſent? Eſpecially, when we conſider his *admirable Condeſcention* in it, that he is pleaſed (and diſdains not) to *Capitulate* with the *Work of his Hands*, to *Article* with *Duſt* and *Aſhes*. Is it reaſonable *we* ſhould be *ſlight* and *ſuperficial*, in a Treaty with that *great Lord of Heaven and Earth*; or ſcarce ever, *purpoſely apply* and *ſet our ſelves* to Mind him in it at all?

Moreover it is *your own Concernment*, and therefore ought to be tranſacted *by your ſelf*. So far as there is any *Equity* in that *Rule*, *Quod tangit omnes debet ab omnibus tractare*. *What Concerns all ſhould be Tranſacted by all*,

it reſolves into *this*, and ſuppoſes it. *Quod tangit meipſum debet tractare a meipſo. That which concerns my ſelf ſhould be tranſacted by my ſelf.*

Again, *your being devoted by Parents*, no more Excuſes from *ſolemn, perſonal, ſelf-devoting*, than their doing *other Acts of Religion* for you, Excuſes you from doing them for your ſelves. They have Prayed for you, are you therefore never to Pray for your ſelves? They have lamented your Sin, are you never therefore to lament your own?

Further *Scripture* warns us not to lay too much ſtreſs upon *Parental Priviledge*, or place too much Confidence in it, which it ſuppoſes Men over apt to do, *Mat.* 3. 7, 8, 9. *Abraham's Seed* may be *a Generation of Vipers*. John 8. 37, 44. *I know you are Abraham's Seed*, yet he finds them *another Father*.

Conſider moreover, the *renewing Work* of *God's Grace* and *Spirit* upon Souls, conſiſts in ſanctifying their *natural Faculties*, their Underſtandings, Conſciences, Wills, Affections. And what are theſe ſanctify'd for, but to be uſed and exerciſed? And to what more noble Purpoſe? If there be that *Holy Impreſs* upon the Soul, that inclines all the Powers of it *God-ward*; what ſerves it for, but to Prompt, and lead it on to the Correſpondent Acts? To apprehend and eye

God,

God, to admit a Conviction of Duty, and, particularly, how I owe *my ſelf* to him, to Chooſe, Love, Fear, and Serve him, and what doth all this import leſs, than an entire *Self-Reſignation* to him? So that the genuine Tendency of the *Holy New Nature* is, *in nothing*, ſo directly anſwered, and ſatisfy'd as *in this.*

And it ought to be conſidered, that the *Faculties* of our *reaſonable Souls* have a *natural Improvement* and Perfection, as well as *a Gracious.* And *for their higheſt and nobleſt Acts*, 'tis fit they ſhould be uſed in their *higheſt Perfection.* 'Tis poſſible, that in the *Children* of *Religious Parents*, there may be ſome *Pious Inclinations*, betimes; and *the ſooner* they thereupon chooſe the *God of their Fathers, the better, i. e.* if you compare *doing it*, and *not doing it*, 'tis better *done*, than *not done.* But becauſe this is a Thing that cannot be *too often* done, nor *too well.* The more Mature your Underſtanding is, the better it will be done, the Grace of God concurring. Our Lord himſelf *increas'd in Wiſdom*, &c.

Moreover, let it be ſeriouſly Thought on (what 'tis dreadful to think) the Occaſion you ſhould give, if you decline *this ſurrendring* your ſelves, to have your neglect taken for a *Refuſal.* 'Tis impoſſible, when you once underſtand the Caſe, you can

can be *in an indifferency* about it. You muſt either take, or leave.

Nor can it be deny'd but *Perſonal* Self-devoting, *one way*, or *other* (*more*, or *leſs Solemn*) is moſt neceſſary to the continuing *ſerious Chriſtianity* in the World. Without it, our *Religion* were but *res unius ætatis*, *The Buſineſs of an Age*. For how unlikely were it, and abſurd to ſuppoſe, that a Man ſhould ſeriouſly devote his *Child* to God, that never devoted *Himſelf?* And if that were done never ſo ſeriouſly, muſt one be a *Chriſtian* always, only by the *Chriſtianity of another*, not *his own? Some way or other* then, a Man muſt devote *himſelf to God in Chriſt*, or be, at length, no *Chriſtian*. And ſince he muſt, the *Nature of the Thing* ſpeaks, that the *more Solemn*, and *Expreſs* it is, *the better*, and *more ſuitable* to a Tranſaction with *ſo great a Majeſty*.

And hath not *common Reaſon* taught the World, to fix a *tranſitus*, and *ſettle ſome time, or other*, wherein Perſons ſhould be reckon'd to have paſt out of their *State of Infancy*, or Minority, into *the State of Manhood*, or an Adult State; wherein, though *before*, they could not legally tranſact Affairs for themſelves, yet *afterwards* they could. *This Time*, by the Conſtitutions of ſeveral Nations, and for ſeveral Purpoſes, hath been *diverſly* fix't. But they were not to be look't upon as *Children always*. *Some*

time

time they come to *write Man.* Is it reaſonable one ſhould be a *Child*, and a *Minor* in the *Things of God* and *Religion* all his Days? Always in *Nonage?* Sometime they muſt be *Men in Underſtanding*, 1 Cor. 14. 20. *And have their Senſes exerciſed to diſcern between Good and Evil*, Heb. 5. 14.

Yea, and there is far greater Reaſon we ſhould *Perſonally*, and *Solemnly*, tranſact *this great Affair with God*, than *any Concern* we have *with Men.* For, *among Men*, we may have a Right *by natural Deſcent*, or by *valuable Conſiderations*, to what we enjoy, which may be *clear*, and little liable to Queſtion. *From God* we have no Right, but *by his Favour*, and Vouchſafement. You are his Children, if ever you come to be ſo, but *by Adoption.* And *Humane Adoption* has been wont to be compleated *by a Solemnity*; the Perſon *to Adopt*, being *publickly* askt (in that ſort of *Adoption* which was alſo called *Arrogation*) *utrum eum quem adoptaturus eſſet, juſtum ſibi filium eſſe vellet* —*Whether he would have this Perſon to be as his own very Son?* And again, *ille qui adoptabatur* — *utrum id fieri pateretur? He that was to be adopted, whether he was Contented it ſhould be ſo?*

Cal. *Lex. Furid.*

Nor again is there that *Diſinclination* towards Men, as towards *God*, or that proneneſs to revolt from ſettled Agreements, with *the*

the one, as with *the other*. Whereas Love ſumms up all the Duty of both the *Tables*; or which we owe both to *God*, and *Man*; it is evident that, in our preſent lapſed State, our Love *to God* is more impaired, than *to Man*. Indeed *this latter* ſeems only *diminiſht*, the other is *deſtroyed*, and hath, *by Nature*, no Place in us; *Grace* only reſtores it. Where it is, in ſome Meaſure reſtored, we find it more difficult to exerciſe Love *towards God*, *than Man*. Which the Apoſtle's reaſoning implies, *He that loveth not his Brother, whom he hath ſeen, how can he love God whom he hath not ſeen?* 1 John 4. 20. Who ſees not that *Senſuality* hath buried the rational World! Unregenerate Man is ſaid to be *in the Fleſh*, not as being only *lodg'd in it*, as all are alike, but *govern'd by it, under its Power*. (As the *Holy Apoſtle* is ſaid to have been *in the Spirit on the Lord's Day*.) To be *in the Fleſh* is expounded by *being* and *walking after it*. Hence Men only *Love* and *Savour* the Things within this *ſenſible Sphere*. *They that are after the Fleſh, do only ſavour the Things of the Fleſh*. Where the *Regenerate*, *Divine Life* is implanted, it doth *male habitare*, *is ill lodg'd*, in Conjunction with a ſtrong *remaining ſenſual Inclination*. So that where the Soul is ſomewhat raiſed *by it*, out of that *Mire* and *Dirt*, there is a continual *decidency*, a proneneſs to relapſe, Revelat. 1. Rom. 8.

relapſe, and ſink back into it. Impreſſions therefore of an *inviſible Ruler* and *Lord* (as of all unſeen Things) are very evanid; ſoon, in a great Degree, worn off. Eſpecially where they were but *in making*, and not yet *throughly in-wrought* into the *Temper* of the Soul. Hence is that *inſtability* in the Covenant of God. We are not ſo *afraid*, before, nor *aſhamed*, afterwards, of breaking Engagements with *him*, as *with Men*, whom we are often *to look in the Face*, and Converſe with every Day.

Therefore there is the more need *here*, of the *ſtricteſt Ties*, and moſt *ſolemn Obligations*, that we can lay upon our ſelves. How apprehenſive doth that Holy, Excellent Governour, *Joſhua*, ſeem of this, when he was ſhortly to leave the People under his Conduct! Joſh. 24.

And what *urgent Means* doth he uſe, to bring them to the moſt *expreſs*, *ſolemn Dedication of themſelves to God*, that was poſſible. Firſt repreſenting the *Reaſonableneſs* and *Equity* of the *Thing*, from the many endearing Wonders of *Mercy* (as here the Apoſtle beſeeches theſe *Romans* by *the Mercies of God*) which he recounts from the *beginning*, to the 14th *Verſe* of that 24th *Chapter*. Then, thereupon exhorting them to *Fear the Lord and Serve him in Sincerity*, &c. in that 14th *Verſe*. Telling them, withall, if they ſhould *all* reſolve otherwiſe

wiſe *to a Man*, what his *own Reſolution* was, Verſe 15. *And if it ſeem Evil unto you to ſerve the Lord, chooſe you this Day whom ye will ſerve, whether the Gods which your Fathers ſerv'd, that were on the other ſide of the Flood, or the Gods of the Amorites, in whoſe Land ye dwell: But as for me and my Houſe, we will ſerve the Lord.* Taking alſo their *expreſs Anſwer*, which they give, *Verſe* 16, 17, 18. But, fearing they did not enough conſider the Matter, he, as it were, *puts them back* (eſteeming himſelf to have gotten an Advantage upon them) that they might *come on again*, with the more Vigour and Force. *Ye cannot ſerve the Lord, for he is an Holy God: He is a jealous God, he will not forgive your Tranſgreſſions nor your Sins. If you forſake the Lord, and ſerve ſtrange Gods, then he will turn and do you hurt, and conſume you, after that he hath done you good*, Verſe 19, 20. Hereupon, according to his *Expectation* and *Deſign*, they reinforce *their Vow*, *Nay but we will ſerve the Lord.* And upon *this*, he cloſes with them, and takes faſt hold of them, *Ye are Witneſſes* (ſaith he) *againſt your ſelves, that ye have choſen the Lord to ſerve him.* And they ſay, *We are Witneſſes*, Ver. 22. He exhorts them afreſh, and they engage over again, *Verſe* 23, 24. Thus a Covenant is made with them, *Verſe* 25. After all this *a Record* is taken of the *whole*

Tranſ-

tranſaction, 'tis *book'd* down, *verſ.* 26. And *a monumental Stone* ſet up, to preſerve the *Memory* of this *great Tranſaction*. And the *good Man* tells them, *Behold this Stone ſhall be a Witneſs unto us; for it hath heard all the Words of the Lord which he ſpake unto us: It ſhall therefore be a Witneſs unto you*, leſt ye deny your God. So he diſmiſſes them; and lets them go every one to his Inheritance.

Nor is it to be neglected that *Iſa.* 44. 5. (which is generally agreed to refer to the times of the *Goſpel*) it is ſo expreſly ſet down, *One ſhall ſay I am the Lords, and another ſhall call himſelf by the Name of Jacob: And another ſhall ſubſcribe with his Hand unto the Lord, and Sirname himſelf by the Name of Iſrael.* In the rendring of which Words [Subſcribe with the Hand] the *Verſions* vary. Some Read *Inſcribe in their Hands, the Lords Name*, counting it an alluſion to *the ancient Cuſtom*, as to *Servants* and *Soldiers*, that they were to carry Stampt upon the Palm of their Hands, the Name of their *Maſter* or *General*. The *Syriack* Read to the ſame Senſe as we—Shall give *an hand Writing to be the Lords. That the thing be done*, and with great *Serioufneſs*, *Diſtinctneſs* and *Solemnity*, is, no doubt, highly reaſonable, and neceſſary, about the *particular manner* I preſcribe not.

Nor

Nor can I imagine what any Man can have to *object*, but the *backwardneſs of his own Heart* to any *Intercourſe*, or *Converſation* with the *inviſible God*. Which is but an *Argument* of the *miſerable Condition* of deprav'd Mankind. (*None*, that *the thing is not to be done.*) For, that *backwardneſs* muſt proceed from ſome *deeper Reaſon* than that *God is Inviſible*. A *Reaſon*, that ſhould not only *convince*, but *amaze* us, and even overwhelm our Souls in Sorrow and Lamentation, to think what State the *Nature* and *Spirit* of *Man* is brought into! For is not the *Devil Inviſible* too? And what *Wretch* is there ſo Silly and Ignorant, but can, by the urgency of *Diſcontent*, *Envy*, and an *Appetite* of *Revenge*, find a way to fall into a League with him! Is *this*, that *God* is *leſs Converſable* with *Men*? *Leſs willing* to be *found* of them that *ſeek Him*? No ſurely, * but that *Men* have *leſs Mind*, and *Inclination* to *ſeek* Him! And is this a *Poſture*, and *Temper of Spirit* towards the *God that made us*, (the *continual Spring* of our *Life* and *Being*!) In which it is fit for us to tolerate our ſelves? Shall not the *neceſſity* of *this thing*, and of *our own Caſe*, (not capable of Remedy while we *withhold our ſelves from God*) overcome all the *imagined difficulty* in applying our ſelves to Him?

* *Read conſiderately, Heb.* 11. 6.

Uſe. And upon the whole if we agree the *thing it ſelf* to be *neceſſary*, It cannot be doubted, but it will appear to be *of common Concernment to us all*; and that *every one* muſt apprehend it is neceſſary *to me*, and *to me*, whether we *have done it* already, or *not done it*. *If we have not*, it cannot be done too *ſoon*; *if we have*, it cannot be done *too often*. And it may *now* be done, by Private, Silent Ejaculation, the *convinced*, *perſwaded* Heart *ſaying within it ſelf*, "Lord I conſent to be wholly thine, I "here reſign, and devote *my ſelf*, *abſolutely*, "and *entirely* to thee. None of you know what may be in the Heart of another, to this purpoſe, *even at this time*. Why then ſhould not every one fear to be the *only Perſon* of thoſe who now hear, that diſagrees to it. If any finds his Heart to *reluctate* and *draw back*, 'tis fit ſuch a one ſhould conſider, *I do not know but this ſelf-devoting diſpoſition, and Reſolution is the* common Senſe *of all the reſt, even of all that are now preſent but mine.* And who would not dread to be the only One in *an Aſſembly*, that ſhall *refuſe*, God! Or *refuſe himſelf* to him! For, let ſuch a One think, what particular Reaſon can I have to Exclude my ſelf from ſuch a conſenting *Chorus?* Why ſhould I ſpoil the *Harmony*, and give a diſagreeing Vote? Why ſhould any Man be more willing to be *Dutiful* and *Happy* than I? To be

juſt

juſt to God, or have him *good* to me? Why ſhould any One be more willing to be ſaved than I? And to make *One* hereafter, in the Glorious, Innumerable, Joyful *Aſſembly* of *Devoted Angels* and *Saints*, that pay an Eternal gladſom Homage to the Throne of the Celeſtial King?

But if any find their Hearts inclining, let what is *now begun*, be *more fully compleated in the Cloſet*; and let *thoſe Walls* (as *Joſhua's ſtone*) hear, and bear Witneſs!

Leſt any ſhould not conſent, and that all may conſent *more freely*, and more *largely*; I ſhall in a few Words ſhew *what ſhould induce to it*, and *what it ſhould induce.*

1. *What ſhould induce to it.* You have divers ſorts of *Inducements.*

Such as may be taken from *neceſſity.* For what elſe can you do with *your ſelf*? You *cannot be Happy* without it, For who ſhould make you ſo but God? And how ſhall he, while you hold off your ſelves from him? You *cannot but be Miſerable*, not only as *not having engaged him to you*, but as *having engaged him againſt you.*

Such as may be taken from *Equity.* You are *his right.* He hath a *natural right* in you, as he is your *Maker*, the *Author of your Being.* And an *acquired right* as you were *bought by his Son, who hath Redeemed us* to God, *and who dyed, roſe again, and revived, that he might* Rev. 5. 9.

be Lord of the living and the dead, here, to *rule*, hereafter, to *judge us*. Both which he can do *whether we will or no*. But 'tis not to be thought he will *ſave* us *againſt our Wills*. His Method is *whom he ſaves*, firſt *to overcome*, *i. e.* to make them *willing*, *in the Day of his Power*. And dare we, who *live*, *move*, *and have our being in him*, refuſe to *be*, *live*, and *move to him*? Or *deny the Lord who bought us*?

And again, *Such* as may be taken from *Ingenuity*, or that ſhould Work upon it, *viz.* (what we are *beſought by*, *in the Text*) *the Mercies of God*. How *manifold* are they! But they are the *Mercies of the Goſpel eſpecially*, mentioned in the *foregoing Chapter*, which are thus refer'd unto in the *beginning of this*, the *transferring* what the *Jews* forfeited and loſt, by *their unbelief*, unto us *Gentiles*. That Myſtery (as this Apoſtle elſewhere calls it, *Epheſ.* 3. 4, 5, 6.) *which in other Ages was not made known unto the Sons of Men*, *as it is now revealed unto his Holy Apoſtles and Prophets by the Spirit*; *That the Gentiles ſhould be fellow-heirs*, *and of the ſame Body*, *and partakers of his Promiſe in Chriſt*, *by the Goſpel*. In reference whereto he ſo admiringly cries out a little above the *Text* (chap. 11. 33.) Ὦ βάθος *O the depth both of the Wiſdom and and Knowledge of God! How unſearchable are his Judgments*, *and his ways paſt finding out*? The Mercies of which

it

it is ſaid, *Iſa.* 55. 1, 2, 3. *Ho every one that thirſteth come to the Waters, and he that hath no Money: Come ye, buy and eat, yea come, buy Wine and Milk without Money, and without Price. Wherefore do ye ſpend your Money for that which is not Bread, and your Labour for that which ſatisfieth not? Hearken diligently unto me, and eat ye that which is good, and let your Soul delight it ſelf in fatneſs. Encline your ear, and come unto me; hear, and your Soul ſhall live, and I will make an everlaſting Covenant with you, even the ſure Mercies of David.* Which *free* and *ſure Mercies are* heightned, *as to us*, by the ſame doth *endearing* and *awful Circumſtance*, that *theſe Mercies*, are offered to us, *viz.* in conjunction with the ſetting before our Eyes, the *monitory tremendous Example* of a *forſaken Nation* that rejected them, intimated *verſ.* 5. *Behold thou ſhalt call a Nation that thou knoweſt not, and Nations that know not thee ſhall run unto thee.* A caſe whereof our *Apoſtle* ſays, in the foregoing Chapter *Eſaias* was *very bold*, when, ſpeaking of it (in another Place) he uſes the e Words, *I am ſought of them that asked not for me: I am found of them that ſought me not: I ſaid; Behold me, Behold me, unto a Nation that was not called by my Name.* He was *bold in it* indeed, to mention ſuch a thing to a People, unto whom a *jealous Gloriation* in the *Peculiarity* of

Rom. 10. 20.

Iſa. 65. 1.

their Priviledg'd State, their being without *Partners* or *Rivals*, for ſo long a Time, in their *Relation*, and *nearneſs to God*, was grown *ſo natural*. And who took it ſo impatiently, when our *Saviour* did *but intimate* the ſame Thing to them *by Parables*, as that they ſought immediately *to lay Hands on him* for that very Reaſon. So unaccountable a perverſeneſs of Humour reigned with them, that they *envied* to *others*, what they *deſpiſed themſelves*.

Mat. 25. 45. 46

But, *on the other Hand*, nothing ought more highly to recommend *thoſe Mercies* to us, or more engage us to *accept* them *with gratitude*, and *improve* them with a *Cautious Fear*, of committing a like forfeiture, than to have them brought to our Hands, *redeemed from the Contempt* of the former deſpiſers of them; and *that*, ſo terribly, vindicated upon them, *at the ſame Time*; as it alſo ſtill continues to be. That the *natural Branches* of the Olive ſhould be torn off, and we inſerted. That there ſhould be ſuch an Inſtance given us, of the *Severity*, and *Goodneſs* of God. To *them that fell*, *Severity*; but *to us*, *Goodneſs*, if *we continue in his Goodneſs*, to warn us that, otherwiſe, we may expect to be cut off too! And that we might apprehend, if *he ſpared not the natural Branches*, he was as little likely

Chap. 11.

likely *to ſpare us! That when he came to his own and they received him not,* he ſhould make ſo free an offer to us, that *if we would yet receive him* (which if we do, we are, as hath been ſaid, to yield up and Dedicate our ſelves to him at the ſame Time) we ſhould have the *Priviledge*, to be owned *for the Sons of God!* What ſhould ſo oblige us to Compliance with him, and make us with an *ingenuous trembling* fall before him, and (crying to him my *Lord* and my *God*) reſign our ſelves wholly, to his *Power* and *Pleaſure.*

And even *his Mercies*, more *abſtractly* conſidered, ought to have that Power upon us. Were we not loſt? Are we not reſcued from a *Neceſſity of Periſhing*, and being loſt for ever, in the moſt coſtly Way? Coſtly, to our *Redeemer*, but *to us, without coſt.* Is it a *ſmall Thing*, that he *offers himſelf to us*, as he doth, when he *demands us*, and requires that we offer our ſelves to him. That *he, in whom is all the fulneſs of God*, having *firſt offered himſelf for us*, doth now offer himſelf alſo to us. That he hath treated us, hitherto, with *ſuch Indulgence*, waited on us with *ſo long Patience*, ſuſtained us by *ſo large Bounty.* And now, upon all, when it might be Thought we ſhould be communing with our own Hearts, diſcourſing the Matter with our ſelves, *What ſhall we ren-*

der? That he ſhould ſay to us ſo ſhortly and compendiouſly *render your Selves?* Is that too much? Are we *too inconſiderable to be his*, or his Mercies *too inconſiderable* to oblige us to be ſo? The *Mercies* that flow ſo freely *from him*, for he is *the Father of Mercies.* The *Mercies* that are ſo ſuitable *to us*, *Pardon* to the *Guilty*, *Light* to them that *dwell in Darkneſs*, *Life* to the *Dead*, a *rich Portion* and All-ſufficient fullneſs, for the *Poor*, *Indigent*, and *Neceſſitous:* The *Mercies* that we are encouraged *to expect* as well as what *we enjoy.* The *great Good laid up in ſtore!* The *Mercies* of *Eternity* to be added to thoſe of *Time.* The *Mercies* of *both Worlds*, meeting upon us! That *here*, we are to *keep*

Jude 21. *our ſelves in the Love of God, waiting for the Mercy of our Lord Jeſus Chriſt unto Eternal Life!* That, looking for that *bleſſed Hope*, our Life may here, in the mean Time, be tranſacted with him. That we may abide in the *ſecret of his Preſence*, and *dwelling in Love*, may *dwell in God* who is Love; till the ſeaſon come, when we ſhall be able more fully to underſtand his Love, and return our own!

Nor are the *Favours of his Providence* to be Thought little of, in the Time of our *Earthly Pilgrimage.*

And now, if all this do Effectually *induce* us thus to *dedicate our ſelves.*

2. We

2. We are next to consider what *our having done it*, ought *further* to *induce us unto.*

In the General, it ought to be an *Inducement* to us (as we may well apprehend) to *behave our selves answerably* to such a State, as we are, hereby, brought into, if we *now first dedicated* our selves to him, and are confirmed in, by our Iterations of it. For he *takes no Pleasure in Fools*, therefore having *vow'd our selves to him*, to serve, and live to him, let us Pay what we have Vowed. Better it had been *not to Vow*, than *to Vow and not Pay*; and, instead of the *reasonable Sacrifice* he required of us, to give him only the *Sacrifice of Fools.* We are, upon *special Terms*, and for *special Ends*, *peculiar* to the *most high God.* They that are *thus his*, are a *Royal Priesthood*, *He hath made us Kings and Priests.* Both Rev. 1. 6. those Offices and Dignities have sometime met in the same Person. And *to God and his Father*, i. e. *for him.* Not that both those Offices do *terminate upon God*, or that the Work of both is to be performed *towards him*, but our *Lord Jesus*, it being the design of *his Father* we should be brought into that high, and honourable Station, hath effected it, *in Compliance with his Design*, and hath *served his Pleasure*, and *Purpose* in it. He hath done it *to*, i. e. *for him.* So that, *to God, and his Father* may be refer'd *to Christ's Action*, in making *us*

Kings

Kings and *Prieſts*, not *to ours*, being made ſuch. Yet the *one* of *theſe* refers *to God* immediately, the *other* to *our ſelves*. *Holy* and *Good Men* are *Kings* in Reference *to themſelves*, in Reſpect of their *Self-Dominion* into which they are now reſtored, having been, as all unregenerate Perſons are, Slaves to Vile, and Carnal Affections, and Inclinations. *The Minds of the Regenerate* are made *Spiritual*, and now *with them* the refin'd, rectify'd, *Spiritual Mind*, is inthroned; lift up into its *proper Authority*, over all ſenſual Inclinations, Appetitions, Luſts and Paſſions. A glorious Empire! founded in *Conqueſt*, and managed, afterwards when the Victory is compleat (and in the mean Time, in ſome Degree, while *Judgement is in bringing forth unto Victory*) by a ſteady, ſedate Government, in moſt perfect *Tranquility* and *Peace*.

But they are *Prieſts* in Reference *to God*, the Buſineſs of *their Office*, as *ſuch*, terminates upon *him*. For *him* they worſhip and ſerve.

Worſhip is either *ſocial*, *external* and *circumſtantial*, *that* of worſhipping Societies, conſidered according to its exteriour Part. Herein *One* is appointed by *ſpecial Office* to do the part of a Prieſt, *for the reſt*. In *this Senſe* all are not *Prieſts*.

Or elſe it is *ſolitary*, *internal*, *ſubſtantial* and *ſpiritual* wherein they either *worſhip alone*, and apart by themſelves, or being in Conjun-

Conjunction with others, yet their *own Spirits* within them work *directly*, and aſpire upwards to God. And as to *this more noble Part* of their Worſhip, every Holy Man is *his own Prieſt.*

And this is the *double Dignity* of every Holy, Devoted Soul. They are thus *Kings*, and *Prieſts*; *govern themſelves*, and *ſerve God.* While they *govern*, they *ſerve.* *Exerciſe* Authority over themſelves, with moſt ſubmiſs Veneration of God. Crowned, and Enthroned; but always in a readineſs to *caſt down their Crowns* at the Footſtool of the Supream, Celeſtial Throne.

Into this State they come by *Self-Dedication.* And now ſurely, 'tis not for ſuch to demean themſelves at a *Vulgar Rate.* They are of the ἐκκλησία πρωτοτόκων, the *Church of the firſt-born written in Heaven*, i. e. the *Church* of the *firſt-born ones*, that is, *all* compos'd, and made up of ſuch (as *that Expreſſion* ſignifies.) *Firſt-born* in a true (tho' not the moſt eminent) Senſe; being *Sons* by the *firſt*, i. e. the *Prime* and *more excellent* ſort of *Birth*, in reſpect whereof they are ſaid to be *begotten again* by the Word of Truth, that they ſhould be a kind of *firſt-fruits of the Creatures of God.* And this *Twofold Dignity* is the Priviledge of their *Birthright* (as anciently it was.) Are you devoted to God? Have you Dedicated your

Heb. 12.

James 1. 18.

your

ſelves? Hereby you are arrived to this Dignity. For in the above-mentioned Place it it is ſaid *Ye are come*, you are actually, already, adjoin'd to that Church, and are the real preſent Members of that *Holy Community*. For you are related and united to him *of whom the Family of Heaven and Earth is named*; are of the houſhold, and the Sons of God, *his*, under that *peculiar Notion*, when you have Dedicated your ſelves to him. You cannot but apprehend there are *Peculiarities* of Behaviour, in your after-conduct, and management of your ſelves that belong to you, and muſt Anſwer, and correſpond to *your being*, *in this Senſe*, *his*. *Some Particulars* whereof I ſhall briefly mention.

Heb. 12.

Ephes. 3.

You ſhould each of you, often *reflect upon it*, and bethink your ſelf *what you have done*; and whoſe *you now are*. *I am the devoted One of the moſt high God*. It was one of the Precepts given by a *Pagan* to his Diſciples. "Think with your ſelf, "upon all Occaſions, *I am a* "*Philoſopher*. What a World of Sin, and Trouble might that Thought, often renew'd, prevent, *I am a Chriſtian*, One devoted to God in *Chriſt*. Your having done this Thing, ſhould cloath your Mind with *new Apprehenſions*, both *of God*, and *your ſelves*. That *he* is not now a Stranger to you,

Epict.

you, but *your God*, that you are not *unrelated* to him, *but his*. *I was an Enemy, now am reconciled. I was a common, prophane Thing, now Holineſs to the Lord.* 'Tis ſtrange to think how *One Act* doth ſometimes *Habit*, and *Tincture* a Man's Mind; whether in the kind of *Good*, or *Evil*. To have committed an *Act of Murther!* What an horrid *Complexion of Mind* did *Cain* bear with him *hereupon*. To have *dedicated one ſelf* to God, if *ſeriouſly*, and *duly* done; would it have leſs Power to poſſeſs One, with an *Holy, Calm, Peaceful Temper of Mind?*

You ſhould, hereupon, *charge your ſelf with all ſuitable Duty towards him*. For you have given your ſelf to him *to ſerve him*, that is your very Buſineſs. You *are his*, and are to do *his Work, not your own*, otherwiſe than as it falls in with his, and is his.

You are to Diſcharge your ſelf of all unſuitable Cares, for will not *he* take Care *of his own, Who* hath put *ſo ill a Note* upon them that do not? *He that provideth not for his own, (his Domeſticks) thoſe of his own Houſe, hath deny'd the Faith, and is worſe than an Infidel?* Will you think, *he* can be like ſuch a One? *Who?* If not the *Children of a Prince*, ſhould live free from Care?

You ſhould moſt deeply concern your ſelf about *his Concernments*, without any Appre-

Apprehenſion or fear that he will neglect *thoſe* that are *moſt truly yours*. And are not to be indifferent how *his Intereſt* thrives, or is depreſt in the World; is increaſt, or diminiſht. They that are *his* ſhould let *his Affairs* engroſs their Cares, and Thoughts.

You ſhould abandon all *ſuſpicious*, *hard* Thoughts of him. When, in the habitual bent of your Spirits, you deſire to pleaſe him, it is moſt injurious to him, to think he will abandon, and give you up to periſh, or become your Enemy. 'Tis obſervable what Care was taken among the *Romans*, *Ne quid dedititiis hoſtile illatum ſit.* That *no Hoſtility might be uſed towards them that had ſurrendred themſelves.* Can *Men* exceed *God* in praiſe-worthy Things? You can think nothing of God more contrary to his *Goſpel*, or his *Nature*, than to ſurmiſe he will deſtroy one that hath ſurrender'd to and bears a Loyal Mind towards him. And what a Reproach do you caſt upon him, when you give others Occaſion to ſay *his own, they that have devoted themſelves to him, dare not truſt him?* You are taught to ſay, *I am thine ſave me*, not to ſuſpect he will Ruine you. They do ſtrangely miſhape *Religion*, conſidering, in how great Part, it conſiſts *in truſting God*, and living a *Life of Faith*, that frame to themſelves a *Religion* made up of Diſtruſts, Doubts, and Fears.

You

You ſhould dread to alienate your ſelves from him. Which (as Sacriledge is one of the moſt deteſtable of all Sins, *a robbing of God*) is the moſt deteſtable Sacriledge. You are to reſerve your ſelves entirely for him. *Every one that is godly he hath ſet apart for himſelf.* Pſalm 4.

Yea, and you are not only to *reſerve*, but, to your uttermoſt, to *improve*, and better your ſelves for him daily. To aſpire to *an Excellency*, in ſome meaſure, ſuitable to your Relation. *To walk worthy of God who hath called you to his Kingdom and Glory*, 1 Theſſ. 2. 12. remembring you are *here* to *glorifie him*, and *hereafter* to be *glorified with him.*

And who is there of us that finds not himſelf under ſufficient Obligation, *by the Mercies of God*, unto *all this?* Or to whom he may not ſay, in a far more eminent Senſe, than the *Apoſtle* ſpeaks it to *Philemon*, *thou oweſt even thy ſelf alſo unto me?* Will we refuſe to *give God what we owe?* Or can we think it fit, in it ſelf; "*We* ſhould be "no otherwiſe *his*, than (as one well "ſays) *Fields*, *Woods*, and *Mountains*, and "*brute Beaſts?* And I may adde, can it be *comfortable to us*, he ſhould have no other Intereſt in us than he hath in *Devils?* Is there no Difference in the Caſe of *reaſonable Creatures* and *unreaſonable?* *Theirs* who *profeſs devotedneſs to him*, and *theirs* who

are

are *his profeſt Enemies?* The *one ſort*, thro' natural Incapacity, *cannot, by conſent*, be *his*, and the *other*, *through an invincible Malignity*, never will? Are there no *Mercies* (confer'd or offered) that do *peculiarly* oblige us more? Let us be more frequent, and ſerious in *recounting our Mercies*, and ſet our ſelves on Purpoſe to *enter into the Memory of God's great goodneſs*, that we may thence, *from Time to Time*, urge upon our ſelves this *great and comprehenſive Duty.*

And *at this Time*, being *here together on Purpoſe*, let us conſider, and reflect afreſh, upon *that eminent Mercy*, which you are wont Commemorate in the *yearly return* of *this Day.*

And that I may, more particularly, *direct my Speech the ſame Way, that the* Voice of that memorable Providence *is eſpecially directed.* You *are*, my Lord, *to be more peculiarly* beſought by the Mercies of God, *that you would*, this Day *dedicate your ſelf to him.*

I do beſeech *therefore you*, *by* the many endearing Mercies, *which God hath ſo plentifully confer'd upon you*, *by* the Mercies *of your* noble Extraction, *and* Birth, *by the* Mercies *of your very* Ingenious *and* Pious Education, *by the* Mercies *of your* Family, *which God hath made to* deſcend *to you from your* honourable Progenitors (*which*, *as they are capable of being improved*, *may be*

very

very valuable Mercies.) *By the* Blood, *and* tender Mercies *of your* bleſſed, and glorious Redeemer, *who offered up* himſelf *a* Sacrifice *to God for you, that you would now preſent* your ſelf *to God, an* Holy, Living Sacrifice, *which is your* reaſonable Service. *I adde, by the* ſignal Mercy, *which hath made* this a memorable Day *to you, and* by which *you come, thus long, to enjoy the advantages of* all your other Mercies. *How came it to paſs that* this Day *comes not to be remembred,* by your noble Relatives *as a* black, *and a* gloomy Day, *the Day of the* Extinction *of the* preſent Light, *and* Luſtre *of* your Family; *and of* quenching their Coal which was left? *You had a* great Preſerver, *who, we hope,* delivered you becauſe he delighted in you. *Your* Life *was* precious, in his Sight. Your Breath was in his Hand; *he preſerved, and renewed it to you, when you were ready to breath* your Laſt. *And we hope he will Vouchſafe you that* greater Deliverance, *not to let you fall under the Charge which was once exhibited againſt a* great Man, *Dan.* 5. 23. The God in whoſe Hands thy Breath is —— haſt thou not glorified. *And make you rather capable of adapting thoſe Words,* Pſalm 42. 8. Yet the Lord will command his loving Kindneſs in the Day Time, and in the Night his Song ſhall be with me, and my Prayer unto the God of my Life. *Your Acknowledgments are not*

to be limited to one Day in the Year; *but from Day to Day* his Loving Kindneſs, *and* your Prayer and Praiſe *are to compoſe your* πυκνάσεις, the one, *to ſhew* you, the other, to be unto you your Morning, and Evening exerciſe. *Let this be your Reſolution*, Every Day will I bleſs thee: And I will Praiſe thy Name for ever and ever, *Pſalm* 145. 2. *or* that, *Pſalm* 104. 33. I will ſing unto the Lord as long as I live: I will ſing Praiſe unto my God, while I have my being.

Yet your more ſolemn Acknowledgements *are juſtly* pitcht *upon* this Day. *God hath* noted *it for* you, *and made it a* great Day in your Time. You have now enjoy'd a *Septennium*, ſeven Years of Mercies. And, we all hope, you will enjoy many more, which may all be called the Poſterity of that Days Mercy. It was the Parent of them all; ſo pregnant and productive a Mercy was that of this Day.

You do owe it to the Mercy of this Day, that you have yet a Life to devote to the Great Lord of Heaven and Earth; and to imploy in the World for him. And would you think of any leſs noble Sacrifice?

Æſchines (the Philoſopher) out of his Admiration of *Socrates*, when divers preſented him with other Gifts, made a tender to him of himſelf. Leſs was thought an inſufficient Acknowledgment, of the Worth and Favours of a Man! Can any Thing

Thing leſs be Thought worthy of a God?

I doubt not you intend, my Lord, a Life of Service to the *God* of your *Life*. You would not, I preſume, deſign to ſerve him, under any other Notion, than as his. By dedicating your ſelf to him you become ſo, in the *peculiar Senſe*. It is our Part, in the *Covenant* which muſt be between *God*, and *Us*. *I enter'd into Covenant with thee, and thou becameſt mine*, Ezek. 16. 8. This is the *Ground* of a *ſettled Relation*, which we are to bear towards him, *as his Servants*. 'Tis poſſible I may do an *occaſional Service* for one whoſe *Servant* I am not. But it were mean that a *great Perſon* ſhould only be ſerv'd by the *Servants of another Lord*. To be ſerv'd but precariouſly, and, as it were, *upon Courteſie*, only, *true greatneſs* would diſdain; as if his Quality did not admit to have *Servants of his own*.

Nor can it be thought a ſerious *Chriſtian* (in howſoever dignifying Circumſtances) ſhould reckon himſelf *too great* to be *his Servant*, when even an *Heathen* pronounces *Deo ſervire eſt regnare*, To ſerve God is to Reign. A Religious Nobleman of *France* (whoſe Affection I commend, more than this External Expreſſion of it) tells us he made a *Deed of*

Seneca.

Mounſieur de *Renty.*

Gift, of himself to God, signing it with *his own Blood.* He was much a greater Man that so often speaks in that Style *Thy Servant*, that 'tis plain he took *Pleasure* in it, and counted it *his highest Glory. Stablish thy Word unto* thy Servant, *who is* devoted *to thy Fear*, Psalm 119. 38. Thy Servant, Thy Servant, O Lord, *the* Son *of thy* Handmaid (alluding to the Law by which the Children of Bond-servants were Servants by Birth) *thou hast broken my Bonds*, Psalm 116. hast (*q. d.*) released me from worse Bonds, that I might not only *be patient*, but *glad* to be under *thine.*

Nor was he a *mean Prince* *, in his Time, who, at length, abandoning the Pleasures, and Splendour of his *own Court* (whereof many like Examples might be given) retired and assumed the Name of *Christodulus*, *A Servant of Christ*, accounting the Glory of *that Name* did out-shine, not only *that* of his *other* illustrious *Titles*, but of the *Imperial Diadem* too. There are very few in the World, whom the too-common *Atheism* can give Temptation unto, to think *Religion* an Ignominy, and to count it a Reproach to be the *devoted Servant of the most high God*; but have it at Hand to Answer themselves, even by *Humane* (not to speak of the *higher*

* *Cantacuzenus, whose life also, among many other remarkable things, was once strangely preserved in the Fall of his Horse.*

higher Angelical) Inſtances, that he hath been ſerved by *greater than we.*

You are, my *Lord*, ſhortly to enter upon the more Publick Stage of the World. You will enter with great Advantages of hereditary *Honour*, *Fortune*, *Friends* with the *greater Advantage* of (I hope) a *well cultivated* Mind, and (what is yet greater) of a piouſly inclined *Heart*. But you will alſo enter with *Diſadvantages* too. It is a *ſlippery Stage*; It is a *divided Time*; wherein there is *Intereſt* againſt *Intereſt*; Party *againſt* Party. To have, ſeriouſly, and with a pious Obſtinacy dedicated your ſelf to God, will both *direct*, and *fortifie* you.

I know no Party in which nothing is amiſs. Nor will *that Meaſure*, let you think it adviſeable, to be of any; further than to unite with what there is of *real*, *true Godlineſs*, among them *all*. Neither is there any ſurer *Rule*, or *Meaſure* for your *Direction*, than *this*; to take the Courſe, and Way, which is moſt agreeable to a *State of Devotedneſs to God*. Reduce all Things elſe, hither. Whereſoever you believe, in your Conſcience, there is a *ſincere Deſign* for the Intereſt and Glory of God; the Honour or Safety of your Prince, the real good and welfare of your Countrey, there you are to fall in, and adhere. And the *firſt of theſe* comprehends *the reſt*. You will

will not be the *leſs inclined* but *much the more*, to give *Cæſar* the Things that are *Cæſar*'s, for your giving *God the Things that are Gods*. And that is (as hath been ſaid) principally, and in the *firſt Place* your ſelf; and then all that is yours, to be uſed according to his Holy Rules, and for him, whoſe you are.

And what can be to you the Ground of an *higher Fortitude*? Can they be *unſafe* that have *devoted themſelves to God*? *Dedicate* your ſelf, and you become a Sanctuary (as well as a *Sacrifice*) inviolably *ſafe* in what Part, and in what Reſpects, it is *conſiderable* to be ſo. And who can think themſelves *unſafe* being, with perſevering Fidelity, ſacred *to God*; that underſtand *who he is*; and conſider his *Power*, and Dominion, over *both Worlds*, the preſent, and that which is to come. So as that he can *puniſh*, and *Reward*, in both; as Men prove *falſe*, or *faithful* to him. The *Triumphs of Wickedneſs* are ſhort, in this World. In how *glorious Triumphs* will *Religion*, and *devotedneſs to God*, end, *in the other!*

FINIS.

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